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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 001999

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION FIGURE TSHISEKEDI KEEPING HIS OPTIONS
OPEN

Classified By: Poloff Edward Bestic for Reasons 1.5 B and D

1. (C) SUMMARY: A close adviser to opposition figure Etienne Tshisekedi, leader of the UDPS party, confirmed that the UDPS

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is no longer allied with the RCD-Goma and maintains informal links with Jean-Pierre Bemba's MLC. In our view, while a Tshisekedi-Bemba alliance during the upcoming elections is

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certainly possible, we are less likely to see President Kabila teaming up with the UDPS leader. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) Jean-Joseph Mukendi, a close adviser to opposition figure Etienne Tshisekedi told poloff October 27 that Tshisekedi's political party, the Union for Democracy and

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Social Progress (UDPS), has not had a formal alliance with the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD-Goma) movement since late 2003. The UDPS does support RCD-Goma views on certain issues, however, such as nationality. Tshisekedi is also in touch with members of Jean-Pierre Bemba's Congo Liberation Movement (MLC), and in fact Bemba recently invited the UDPS leader to a formal dinner, although Tshisekedi declined. The UDPS expects upcoming elections, set for June 2005, to be all about alliance-building, and is keeping its options open for now.

3. (C) Mukendi said that although there is still a continuing dispute over UDPS legality under the new law on political parties, adopted in early 2004, it is not a serious challenge and lower-level authorities have not harassed UDPS members at all. He added that the UDPS' main agenda item for the near future is to hold a party congress in February 2005, and Tshisekedi does not plan to travel anywhere before then.

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4. (C) COMMENT: Mukendi's view on UDPS-RCD relations contradicts what senior RCD figures have said recently, that the old alliance is very much alive and well. In UDPS eyes, that partnership died in 2003 after the ex-belligerents failed to uphold an unwritten "gentleman's agreement," whereby Tshisekedi would become vice-president in the transitional government. The MLC is a much more attractive partner in terms of winning votes, and if he thought he could win, Jean-Pierre Bemba could probably accept being prime minister under a Tshisekedi presidency. An alliance with President Joseph Kabila is a more awkward fit, because the age difference is more pronounced (Tshisekedi is 70-plus, Kabila is in his early 30s) and both would want to be president. END COMMENT.
MEECE